/221 cont./

The care of women at the time of childbirth has also been culturally assigned to women (Cf. Marriage). However, in certain cases the husband may be present at the birth to give secondary assistance, but only at the request of the expectant mother and the midwife.

When recently born infants develop illnesses of gastro-intestinal types, it is a common in La Guajira to obtain the services of a woman, who attempts to deduce the magic cause of the illness from different characteristics of the /child's/ excrements.

Tattooing, generally used to mark the different clans, and other kinds of markings, in some cases initials or names, are carried out by Guajiro women.

Remunerative work. This form of work, a consequence of the process of acculturation, is developing, especially in urban zones and their environs. It has not, however, broken the traditional distribution of labor by sex but has become subordinate to it, so that the men work for wages in activities appropriate to their sex and women do the same.

Among the remunerative occupations in which the Guajiro man is employed we can point out the following.

a) Pearl fishing, in the zones in which oysters are very abundant such as in the ports of Carrão, Aluyoma, and Carrizal. The native either fishes on his own account and sells the pearls on the open market, or he works for a wage under orders given by a white or a mestizo who hires him as diver. He also participates in small shellfishing for cockles and other species in the northern coastal zone, although sporadically, with the idea of selling his catch on his own account, or as a paid assistant of the whites who are in this business for profit. /230/

b) As a day laborer. At some ports where the loading and unloading ships is of some importance, as happens in Puerto Estrella and in Riohacha, it is the native, who, provided with a boat of his own or one belonging to a merchant, contracts to transport cargo from the ships to land and vice versa. He collaborates especially in the commercial moving of contraband which forms the base of the economic life of these ports.

/330 cont./

c) Mechanic. The Guajiro has a special capacity for learning manual and mechanical work. As a result he rapidly becomes skilled as hauler and even as chauffeur on the roads that cross the peninsula, in the neighboring republic of Venezuela, and in the zone of banana plantations. This activity is very popular among the natives.

d) As an agricultural peon. Another part of the Guajiro labor force finds work in agricultural activities, although agricultural tasks in themselves are not particularly attractive to the native. However, they take up this kind of work more frequently around Riohacha, toward the zone of the so-called "Province" (department of Magdalena), and in Venezuela.

Within the peninsula the Guajiro carries out these activities for mutual assistance and only on rare occasions for payment of wages on the haciendas of rich mestizo or native families. In stock raising there is a special form of remunerative activity for the poor Guajiro who looks after the herds of more well-to-do owners. This form consists of the animals (carefully counted) being handed over to the herdsman to be pastured in exchange for the use of the products from the livestock, milk, hides, and meat of those that die -- some are raised and, sporadically a little corn, cloth for a robe, etc. As we see, it offers a special form of remuneration.

e) As paid laborer. The native works in the saltworks of the Bank of the Republic established on the north coast of La Guajira. Following the traditional division of labor by sex, the men pick and shovel the lumps of salt from the deposits and leave the rest of the work to the women. They do not receive a daily fixed wage but a sum in accordance with the amount done during the day. They also work on a daily paid basis either for a private concern or for one of the various branches of government, working /331/ in trades such as that of bricklayer, salesman, laborer in the making of bricks, burning of lime and charcoal, carting of material, excavation of wells in the Water Supply section, or messenger or servant in the houses of the families of civilizados /mestizos/ in the urban centers.

/233 cont./

f) As a hobby. During the hottest hours of the day or during his spare time, he makes at home small objects that can be sold to his fellow Indians or to whites, such as tools, harness, figures of coconut shell and of plastic material, necklaces, bags, sandals, weapons, hats, etc.

Along with the profession of shaman in which both sexes participate, and that of diviner, we find the occupation of arbitrator, which demands the personal qualities already enumerated in the pertinent chapter and which gives to the individual who exercises it not only prestige among his relatives and compatriots but also the right to remuneration.

Another trade that has become remunerative is that of harness and saddle making. Although some women compete successfully in the manufacture, the culture considers them intruders, because this is an activity recognized traditionally as belonging to the masculine sex.

As a product of acculturation through whites and facilitated by civilization and the closeness of Venezuela as well as by the decline in traditional economic activities, commercial activity has developed among the Guajiro. It is not so much the pure native as it is the mestizo of some economic means who devotes himself to this /commerce/; the fact should be noted that women, under equal conditions, participate actively in the exploitation of this economic source. They go to Aruba and Curaçao and obtain cheap merchandise on credit, which they bring in by smuggling to sell in Colombia, following the route to Riohacha or Valledupar or continuing on the route to Venezuela. Some do not work directly as owners of the goods but as carriers across the peninsula to deliver them at their destination.

Women find remunerative work especially in domestic service, such caring for children, preparing food, carrying water and firewood, cleaning, etc. They also work in the capacity of maids with the obligation of living in the home where they work. The Guajiro woman does not willingly work under these latter conditions as she prefers the free life of her own home, although food

/233 cont./

472 there may be scarce; living in her employer's home, while it may
463 satisfy her basic needs, imposes on her a discipline to which she
● is not accustomed. For this reason, she looks for a way to combine both systems and sells firewood and water in the urban centers, carries messages, washes clothes, clears away rubbish, sells coal, /234/ milk, and foodstuffs, or cooks at some house. But in the evening she returns to her home, /usually/ an enramada /a shelter of branches/ on the outskirts of the city.

Toward the north coast of the peninsula, in the wooded lands of this zone, divi-divi occurs in sufficient quantity to enable the Guajiro woman to collect and sell it to the whites, who send it to the interior.

The women also take part in the work in the saltworks, as we have seen, in order to assist their husbands in the transport of the material.

The women of Jarara have been the principal makers of pottery, since they have abundant raw material at their disposal, which is lacking in other regions. For this reason, at the present time, they try to supply the entire peninsula by making a considerable supply with which they travel through the country and obtain an adequate remuneration either by barter or by sale.

Weaving of cloth, as we have said, supplies the women with
280 a source of income. Some well-to-do Indian and mestizo women
463 have organized a /specialized/ division of labor to supply the
472 demand for hammocks and bags in the markets of Maracaibo and in some towns in the department of Magdalena.

These women, well informed about the state of the market, prepare in their homes hammocks of fashionable colors and regulation size. They hand over a design of their own or one copied from a magazine to a poor Guajiro woman who takes it to her house and works it up on her own loom during her spare time. Once the central part is woven the owner hands it on to a worker expert in finishing, then a third one with her spinning tackle makes the cords. While these portions are being made in sequence, the fringes to match the color of the central part have been made by

/234 cont./

472 one or more other women, who if required will complete the
463 work by making the tassels that adorn it. Each one of these
236 women workers is controlled by the owner, of the raw material from whom they receive it. They do it in their respective homes. The completed work is paid for in accordance with the skill and quality /of its execution/ and not by the time spent on it. The finished product is the property of the owner of the raw material, who can sell it at her convenience. The tools and equipment employed belong to the workers. Another common practice is for some poor women to weave the cloth on their own account, and later to sell it to a rich woman who has facilities for bringing the product to the market. The cloth is always sold at a lower price to give the intermediary a margin of profit. /235/

A third form consists of receiving orders and weaving personally, or using weavers who receive wages and who work at home, hammocks, bags, and items of harness previously ordered by the merchants.

472 An occupation that allows the Guajiro woman to obtain some
463 income is dressmaking. Guajiro women learn to sew the robes for both masculine and feminine use, and other articles of apparel, which they sew not only for their home needs and their relatives but also to fill orders from customers.

In the Sierra de Jarara and the Sierra de Macuira and in other places distant from urban centers, some old women live who are acquainted with the magic and curative properties of various plants. This knowledge is usually transmitted from mother to eldest daughter and is much sought after and remunerated in proportion to the importance of the case, its efficacy, and the prestige of the herbal expert who prescribes it, and the importance of the person who requests it.

Another profession is that of midwife, who receives payment in relation to her ability and the means of whoever applies for her services.

Unfree work. This is done by bond-servant or slave labor. See chapter /VIII/ Slavery and Bond Service. /page 236 is blank/

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The Guajiro did only trade with the
439 whites, but they did a lively trade with each other, using
[436] cattle as their currency. Thanks to this there was a form of
incipient specialization. Pottery and weapons were the main
articles of trade. The rich bought those made by specially
[556] skilled craftsmen, who made so much money that they con-
●463] centrated largely on producing things to sell. The poor had
to make all their own things. Everywhere there were people
who could weave and spin, and make pottery, but those
who could afford it liked to buy what was best and loveliest.

We wanted to buy articles in general use, but the irritating thing was that the rich did not need to sell and only did so if it amused them, or if they got an especially good price; while the poor had nothing to sell. Those who made these articles as a craft liked to use materials bought from the whites. In the old days they used to weave their textiles of homespun cotton thread dyed with vegetable dyes; now they not infrequently bought dyed woollen yarn from the whites, but in that remote part of the peninsula they had not yet begun to do so. We saw that they had plenty of hammocks made of bast and cotton yarn. These were larger and more comfortable than was usual and were made with a different technique. The hammock is the genuine Indian
[513] bed, invented in the jungles of South America before the white man ever came there, and has the advantage of being easy to take about and cool to lie in, while the sleeper is protected from all the unpleasant and dangerous insects of the ground.

Throughout the journey we had slept in hammocks—you have to get used to them before you find them comfortable—as long as there was somewhere to hang them. We now told the Indians that we wanted proper hammocks, the kind they themselves used, for we had bought ours from the whites. That started the bargaining.

There was seldom any question of buying for cash—they
439 did not have much confidence in the white man's money—
436 so we had to barter for what we wanted. We soon discovered that apart from our knives, the Indians undervalued all our goods. If we had not had a large case of knives we would never have managed to assemble the collections